



Media Information

DTM

24th July 2020

BMW and South Africa: A very special relationship.

- **With Sheldon van der Linde and Jonathan Aberdein, two South African drivers will line up on the DTM grid for BMW in 2020.**
- **BMW has a long history in South Africa.**
- **Both drivers have been BMW fans since their childhood.**

Munich. When the 2020 DTM season gets underway next weekend (1st/2nd August) at Spa-Francorchamps (Belgium), the grid will feature two BMW works drivers from South Africa: Sheldon van der Linde and Jonathan Aberdein. This is van der Linde's second season at the wheel of the BMW M4 DTM. Aberdein, meanwhile, is contesting his first year as a works driver for the Munich-based manufacturer. The BMW brand can look back on a long history in South Africa, while both drivers have been fans of BMW since they were young boys.

The BMW Group's first plant outside Germany opened in South Africa in 1973. Over the next 35 years, more than one million BMW 3 Series were produced at the site in Rosslyn, to the north of Johannesburg. At the Rosslyn BMW plant, BMW also created the BMW 530 MLE in 1976, which is widely seen as one of the early steps of BMW Motorsport. The racing version of the BMW 530 MLE won the Star Modified Racing Series three times in a row and went on to become the world's most successful 5 series on the track. After a big investment, the Rosslyn plant was converted to produce the new BMW X3 in 2018. BMW South Africa employs over 40,000 people directly and indirectly, and is one of the country's leading exporters of automobiles.

South Africa also plays a special role in the motorsport history of BMW: Nelson Piquet (BRA) won the World Championship title in the final Formula 1 race of the 1983 season at Kyalami, in the province of Gauteng. That was the first Formula 1 title for BMW and the first for a car with a turbo engine.

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Kyalami is also the racetrack, with which van der Linde associates his first memories of BMW. He comes from a family of racing drivers and his father Shaun used to drive BMW cars on the touring car scene. “I grew up next to the race track from I think four years old, watching my Dad race in a BMW at that time”, van der Linde remembered. “That was my first memory of BMW and that was where it kick-started. BMW stayed in my mind since then and that is why I always wanted to become a BMW driver one day, because I grew up with it and I think it was clear that I wanted to make the next step at some point in my life and also be like my Dad. He was my example and I obviously wanted to do what my Dad was doing.” Van der Linde achieved that goal in the 2019 season, when he joined the squad of BMW works drivers.

Another dream came true for van der Linde last autumn when he contested a home race in South Africa as a BMW works driver. He raced in a BMW M6 GT3 for BMW Team Schnitzer at the finale of the 2019 Intercontinental GT Challenge at Kyalami. “I would have never expected to be in a BMW at Kyalami exactly like my Dad was long ago. For me, it was a very special event and one of my highlights of last year”, van der Linde said. “It was my first ever home race as a BMW works driver and just having all the home support from the fans and BMW South Africa was phenomenal. There are so many passionate BMW fans in South Africa and I had the feeling that we had the majority of the fans on our side.”

The father of his new fellow BMW works driver, Aberdein, was also an active racing driver, maybe not in BMW race cars, but privately it was he who awakened his son’s enthusiasm for BMW when he was still but a boy. “One day, when I was still pretty young, I arrived home and there was a bright red BMW M3 E46 in the garage that my father had just bought”, Aberdein reflected. “And I thought that was by far the coolest thing I had ever seen in my life. That was a really, really high performance car and still now is one of my favourite BMWs.”

Aberdein’s passion for the brand has never waned. “I’ve always liked all the BMW M3s and M4s that BMW have produced. And then, at the beginning of this year when I signed my first professional contract with BMW, that was a very, very special moment.”

When the two South African BMW DTM drivers get the season underway at Spa-Francorchamps, they can be assured of the support of many of their compatriots. BMW is one of the most popular automobile brands in South Africa. “I myself have

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seen quite a few BMW and BMW M models on the road around Cape Town. They are a very popular choice for South Africans”, Aberdein confirmed. And van der Linde agreed: “The brand is very popular. Not only that people are enthusiastic when they see BMW at the racetrack. You also see so many BMW road cars on the road which is always a nice feeling because you are part of the brand and so many people have so much passion for the brand. For many years, BMW in South Africa has one of the highest market shares in M automobiles in the world. It’s a special feeling to be representing what so many people love in South Africa.”

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